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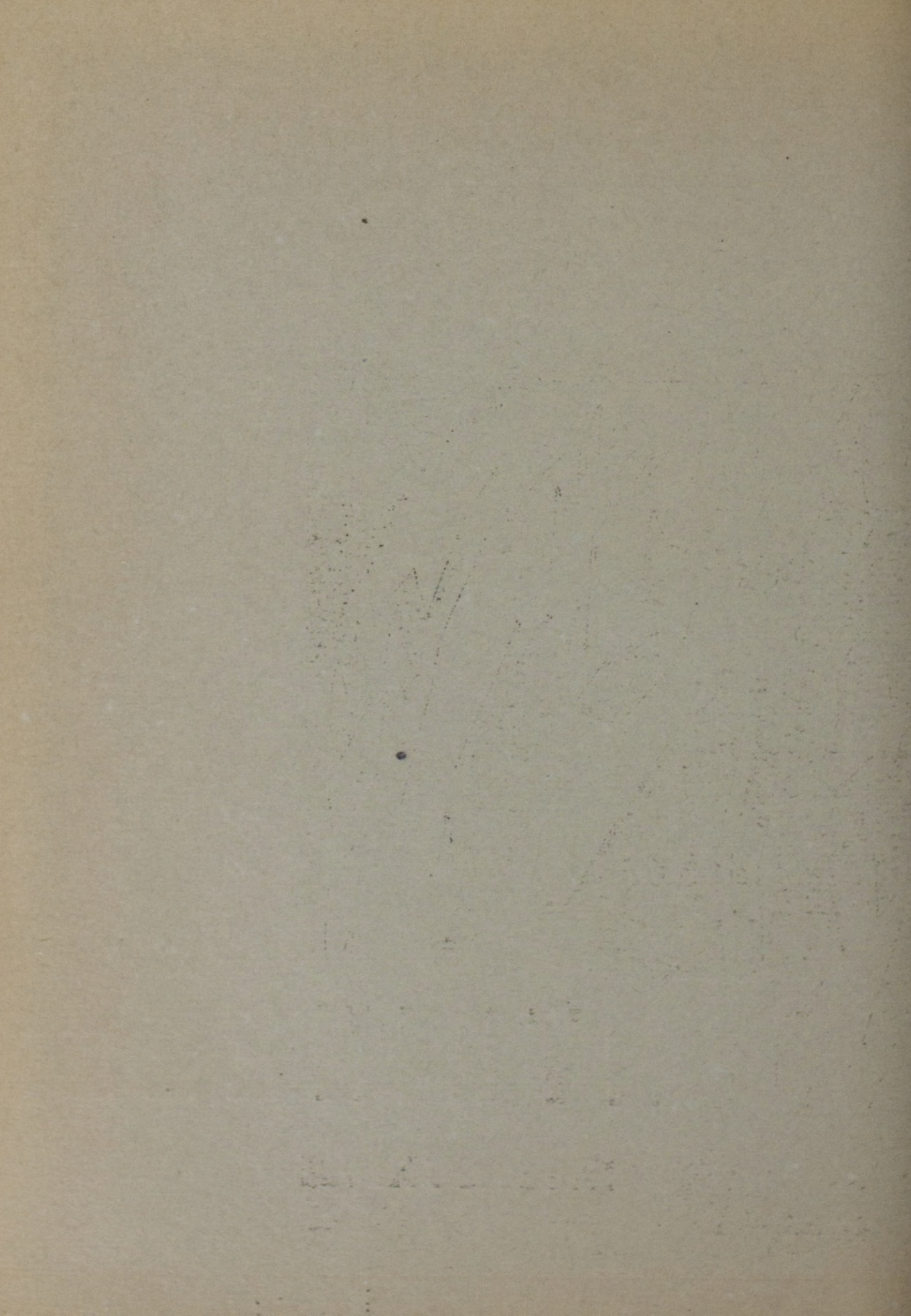
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CONQUERER

By Warren A. Peterson

I

A government report reads: "The white man knew no truce. He came as a conqueror, first of the Indian, then of nature."

The soil, the grass, the buffalo, the Indian, and the weather on the Great Plains of America lived in benevolent understanding before the White Man came. The grass used sparingly of the soil, the buffalo used sparingly of the grass, and the Indian used sparingly of the buffalo. They did not take; they only borrowed, because all eventually in due time gave their bodies back to the soil. But all four--soil, grass, buffalo, and Indian lived with great respect for the weather. If the weather went bad, they sat back and waited for it to get better. If the grasshoppers came, the other calmly waited for them to leave, for in due time they too returned to the soil. If the drouth came, the grass roots drank deeper into the soil's reservoir, the buffalo cropped the short grass a little more closely, and the Indian killed a few more of the buffalo for they were not as fat as usual. Then the rains returned and all was well.

The Red Man is not the only one who can live in harmony with nature. In Sweden a great race of white men, one of the whitest races in fact, has lived in accordance with nature for thousands of years. They take crops from the soil and give fertilizer back to the soil; they take fish from the sea, but do not take all the fish; and they take lumber from the forests and still leave the forests intact.

II

John Stewart Mill in his essay on "Liberty" says: "Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of inward forces that make it a living thing."

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Europe was growing tired of being regimented to the past, and Europeans were seeking to escape their limitations, to create, to expand, to build, and to conquer. The philosophy of individualism, born in England, was spreading to France, Germany, the Low Countries, and Scandinavia. Young men were refusing to follow the model layed out for them by their ancestors, and were moving to America where there was room to develop according to the tendency of inward forces.

For my grandfather, Peter Alfred Peterson, who had always lived by the sea, it was strange to settle in the Great Plains. Minnesota was surely more like his homeland, but he was a strange man, and often did unpredictable things. In the first place, he didn't look very much like a Scandinavian. His eyes were blue, and I suppose that his complexion had once been dark, but when I

knew him, it had been burned by cold salt-water Baltic blasts, by Dakota blizzards, and especially by dry scorching southwesterners that sweep the Plains defiantly in midsummer.

He could have been taken for a Finn, or an Austrian, or a Belgain, but not for a Swede. While Al Peterson was rather small and thin, he compensated for it by his remarkable agility.

It was also odd that they called him "Al" when surely a Peter Peterson should rightfully be called "Pete". No doubt there was an over-abundance of Petes in Sweden and "Al" was more individualistic and distinguishing than "Pete". His father's name was Peter Olson. At the time it was still the custom in Sweden to give each new generation a new surname formed by taking the father's first name and the suffix--son. Thus we Petersons really started with Al.

Peter Olson had a prosperous little farm located on a tiny island in the Baltic three miles from the mainland, and it was bordered by the hills on one side and the lake on the other. In the winter the children skated across the ice to the mainland to school. Then, as now, Sweden had a marvelous educational system. Learning of the rest of the world incited many young Swedes to want to find out things for themselves. The United States, at this time, was carrying on an intensive advertising campaign in Scandinavia in an attempt to get settlers. People were leaving Sweden for America as they now are leaving Montana to work in war industries on the Coast.

I know that my grandfather must have dreamed and wondered and planned long before he decided to come. These are inborn Peterson characteristics, dreaming and wondering and planning, just as loving the farm is an inborn Peterson characteristic.

I envy people who are able to make important decisions slowly, clearly, gently, but firmly like a spring rain that begins as a light mist and gradually intensifies. We can't make decisions that way.

In Dakota in midsummer you can feel a rainstorm coming a long way off. First there is a dreamy, beautiful day with an atmosphere that grows increasingly oppressive, then a rumbling of storm clouds, and a period of terrible foreboding silence. Finally a sharp crack of thunder and lightning rips the clouds apart and the rain comes hard, but as a blessing and a relief.

That is the way Petersons make important decisions: a period of dreamy contemplation, oppressive worrying, noisy bickering, foreboding silence. Then finally some trivial excuse breaks the tension, the die is cast, the decision is made, and there is no turning back.

Probably Al's mother sensed his uneasiness, but he would not confide in her although he felt her searching sympathy. His father no doubt sensed it too, and became angry to think that his son might not consider the home of his ancestors good enough for him. A dynamic tension was created between two perturbed minds imagining

absurd causes for troubles they could not understand. Each fancied that the other was interfering with his rights. There were harsh quarrels about minor details in the work, followed by mutual silence, then a childish contest to see who could keep form speaking longest. It hurt the mother more than either of the others because she could see how absurd it all was, yet there was nothing for her to do about it.

Then, like a clap of thunder that cracked the troubled clouds, the crisis hit that turbulent household. In a last fantastic misunderstanding, the boy arose and announced dramatically that, since he could not be trusted and treated like a man, he was going to leave the damned place. He cried, and, since it hurt his pride to cry, he compensated by intensifying his dogged stubbornness.

Such was probably the situation when my grandfather left home, a tragic situation that was to be repeated so often in Peterson households. The decision, like Dakota rain, was in itself a good thing, but why did it have to occur under such tempestuous circumstances? Because it could not have occurred otherwise. He loved his island home too dearly to have left it in a cool practical manner. Although he loved his home, he simultaneously detested its relentless determination to maintain narrow conventionalities and useless precedents as a basis of conduct, to fashion its new generation after the pattern of its forebears. This latter conviction proved the stronger. As it was impossible for America to separate from England without revolution, so it was often impossible for emigrants to sever age-old family ties without violent misunderstandings, antagonisms, and disputes.

III

You and your land, your turbulent seeking land
Where anything can grow.
And they wasted the pasture and fresh valley,
Stunk the river, shot the ten thousand sky-darkening pigeon
To build sham castles for imitation Medici
And the rugged sons of the rugged sons of death.
--Stephen Vincent Benét

The prairie seemed an extravagant waste of soil and grass and sun. A conservation expert has written: "Probably there is no equally large area in the world that surpassed it (the region of the prairie plains) in original soil fertility. The nearest approaches are the densely populated regions of China and the black lands of Russia." The American prairie was also the world's most favored spot for raising wheat--provided that enough rain came at the right time.

Westward, into the setting sun, pushed the explorers, the trappers, the traders, the hunters, the cattlemen, and the farmers. The Plains, like the rest of the continent, were lavishly endowed with natural resources, resources that the pioneers thought were limitless. Can we, then, condemn them for the waste and misuse of these resources?

There may be just reason for condemning the hunters who slaughtered the buffalo for their hides and allowed the meat to waste, and those who destroyed the beaver and with them a priceless reservoir of moisture that they had guarded. But don't condemn the settlers who came to build homes, to carve farms from a seemingly useless sea of sod, to create a new western agrarian civilization. They came to build, not to exploit, or conquer, or destroy.

Perhaps selfish economic motives were primarily responsible for the relentless conquest. But if you condemn these people for having this motive, you must also condemn an entire civilization. Individualism was a way of life, the most natural way to live on the frontier. In Europe the philosophers and outspoken statesmen spread this doctrine among their people; in America it grew with the people and spread from them to their leaders. A type of civilization that laid its main stress on freedom was possible here.

These people loved freedom, but they were not entirely free. Erwin Edman has said: "Freedom in an absolute sense is a romantic illusion. No one is free from the conditions of nature." The Plains People especially were not free from the conditions of nature. The climate obstinately defies predictions. In some winters the snow lies eight feet deep and drifts to twelve or fifteen feet. Other winters are "black", or without snow all season. Some years there are fall rains that soak the soil so gently and thoroughly that the plow can roll it over effortlessly and put it in perfect condition. Sometimes the spring rains begin right after seeding, causing the grain to grow with extravagant luxury through long days of midsummer sunshine. By mid-July it is dry enough for the harvest to proceed without delay. These are the bumper years.

Unfortunately, the rains do not always cooperate. They may last too long, producing favorable conditions for rust and smut. Or the soil may be so dry that the seed will not sprout, or so wet that the seeding will be delayed until too late in the season. And there are still other factors that have always caused crops to fail in the Dakotas. Hail can destroy a bumper crop in twenty minutes; grasshoppers and hot wind can do just as effective a job in twelve hours and three days respectively.

Many parts of Dakota have never expected to get a crop more often than two years out of three. Unfortunately, even this was not possible. They did not know that their weather ran in cycles of wet and dry years, and that the years of settlement were part of an unusually long wet cycle. A Government report reads: "The eager westward movement of population that followed the close of the Civil War happened to coincide with a period in our history when there was an eager westward movement of population. With an optimism that is hard to condemn, farmers and ranchers mistook a rainfall that happened for a time to continue above the twenty inch margin for the permanent climate."

IV

I am the prairie, mother of men, waiting.
They are mine, the threshing crews eating beefsteak, the
farmboys driving steers to the railroad cattle pens.

They are mine, the crowds of people at the Fourth of July basket picnic, listening to a lawyer read the Declaration of Independence, watching the pinwheels and Roman candles at night, the young men and women two by two hunting the bypaths and kissing bridges.

They are mine, the horses looking over a fence in the frost of late October saying good-morning to the horses over the fence hauling rutabagas to market.

--Carl Sandburg

To the young Swede, Al Peterson, the prairie, as it waved in the sun, seemed like the sea. Both had swallowed countless care-free adventurers who tried to conquer them. Both were bordered by that vague, distant horizon that made you feel lonely but at the same time made you feel free. Both were so extensive and held limitless opportunity if one knew how to develop it. The only differences were that you came in a prairie schooner instead of a merchant ship, you used a plow instead of fishing nets, you took root and grew with the country instead of drifting around like driftwood.

Seven years of drifting since he left home had been enough. Three years of sailing with the Swedish Merchant Marine had been fun. He had visited all the important ports in Sweden, had seen part of Germany, and Denmark, and Norway, and England, and had read a newspaper at midnight by the Arctic summer sun. He liked the work for a while, but he didn't want to spend his whole life that way--just drifting. He did not want to spend all his life taking orders; he wanted to give them. But most of all he wanted to see things grow, and to grow with them.

This was a good country to grow in. There was so much room. Yes, room enough for all the overcrowded and heavily burdened peoples of the Old World.

Al had to import lumber to build his first shack on his homestead because there was no lumber in Dakota. The shack was covered with tar paper and had room for the essentials of life, a bed and a small pot-bellied stove that served both for cooking and heating. Heating and cooking required fuel that also had to be imported.

On the whole it wasn't a bad shack. It kept the snow from drifting in, and that is pretty tight, considering the permeative Dakota blizzard.

Al bought two mules in time to start breaking sod that first fall. You have to break sod in the fall in order that freezing and thawing will help tear it apart so that it can be harrowed into shape by spring. Even then you don't expect to get much of a crop the first year.

Mules, being larger and stronger than horses, are better to use in this tough work. That they were obstinate critters, my grandfather soon found, but they were not more obstinate than he. After a few rounds, they found out who bossed the Peterson ranch.

Another inhabitant of that section of prairie was a wolf-hound named Fritz. Grandpa had a succession of wolf-hounds named Fritz,

I don't know why. Perhaps the state of semi-domestication of the animal reminded him of his own semi-withdrawal from civilization.

A trading post, then a settlement, developed three miles south of the Peterson homestead. Like the other settlers, he went to town on Saturday night, got a few rations, drank a couple of whis-kies, and chatted about crop prospects.

Doland was not a Swedish settlement. None of his close friends were Scandinavian. He could have chosen to live among his own people or relatives of his in Illinois for that matter, but he did not want to. If he was going to live in this country, he determined, he must learn to know the people and learn to speak the language. The most effective way to learn the language, he thought, was to quit speaking Swede. This policy proved its worth in his developing a smooth and active diction seldom found in first generation immigrants. It was only on rare occasions when he became very excited that his y's and j's sometimes became confused. Years later, when his niece arrived from Sweden, although she did not know a word of English, he absolutely refused to talk to her in their native tongue, insisting that she would learn English much faster if she quit speaking Swedish entirely.

This first Peterson must have been an ambitious fellow. After working all day, he hitched up the team and drove three miles to attend night school. He liked this school, not only because he wanted to learn more about English, but mainly because it gave him contact with his neighbors. He progressed rapidly in his studies mainly because he had had a good basic education in Sweden. In two years he had finished the eighth grade, which was all that was offered at that school and which was considered an ample education for all practical purposes anyway.

In addition to school, he had an opportunity to get acquainted with his fellow settlers at community dances and picnics. Girls were priceless and rare on the frontier, and he probably didn't really get acquainted with any American girls until he met Delnette Snell. How he happened to get acquainted with her I cannot imagine. It was to forget her unfortunate first marriage that she had come to Doland. Divorce in those days was frowned on by village gossips with relentless delight, and it must have been particularly humiliating to her mother, an English woman of the Victorian type. The Snells were Wisconsin farmers. Her father and four uncles had all fought in the Civil War, all weighed over 250 pounds, and all came through without a scratch or a cough. If modern geneticists had purposely set about to develop a race of uniformly heavy people, they couldn't turn out a breed more perfect than the Snells. In numbers they were large too, since Pennsylvania Dutch in general were prolific.

In any case, Delnette Snell was disillusioned and wanted to start all over; Al Peterson was lonely and needed a wife. It was a case of mutual benefit more than love, I think, but a deep lasting love developed as the years passed. When my grandmother was an invalid for several months before she died, grandfather cared for her with a loving attentiveness that I have never seen equalled.

The farmer took a wife, and Delnette Snell came to the Peterson homestead. Now it became a home, not just a place to bunk. A garden, some chickens, and milk cows were added to the farm assets. In a few years he was able to build her a four-room frame house.

No, those first years were not easy. There were three bad years in the first ten, but fortunately they did not occur in succession. They could curse their luck, shrug their shoulders, and get ready for a better next year. It was kind of fun, like gambling, for each year was different from the rest and required new techniques. Always there was the tremendous satisfaction of seeing net gains through a period of years that far surpassed their most optimistic expectations. The Petersons were young and could take temporary defeat on the chin and return with greater determination than ever.

V

"Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people, whose breasts He had made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire which might otherwise escape from the face of the earth."
--Thomas Jefferson

In 1870, the population of South Dakota was 11,776; by 1920, it had increased to 636,547, a 5500% increase in a brief fifty years. 80% of this population was rural.

The Plains people were happy, prosperous, and self-satisfied in 1920. Theirs was a way of life second to none. They were proud, intensely but righteously proud of what they had built from a useless expanse of prairie in this brief time. This was a gilded age.

The greatest height of prosperity had been produced by the War. Then the nation was crying for wheat, wheat, and more wheat at a price of five or six dollars per bushel or more. Farmers and even farm laborers were exempt from the draft. Wheat raising was just as worthy and just as honorable a cause as packing a gun. "Food will win the War and write the peace," shouted stump patriots at Fourth of July and Labor picnics.

Dakotans responded by plowing up pastures, working longer hours, seeding more wheat, and making more money. Many farmers tripled their income in the course of two years. Many sold out at tremendous profit to land speculators who came in from the East, and then, in turn, these Dakota farmers moved farther west to break more sub-marginal sod and grow more wheat. At five dollars per bushel the stakes were so great, that one could take a chance on making plenty of money, even if the yield on this drier land were only ten bushels per acre.

Huge threshing outfits started the season in early June in Oklahoma and Texas, and followed the ripening grain far into Saskatchewan where the season ended in late September. Picturesque

caravans of cook cars on wheels, they were. Except for charging the farmer a certain percentage for threshing his grain, they caused him no inconvenience whatever. The farmer's wife didn't even have to worry about feeding a threshing gang any more.

The weather and the soil cooperated in this mass production of bread for the Allied armies. There had not been a crop failure for so long that only the Old Timers even remembered such things and of these only the extreme pessimists even wanted to recall them. The broken sod, after fifteen or twenty years of rotting, now had reached its maximum productivity, offering the greatest amount of plant food to the wheat when it needed food the most. The rains, too, came at just the right time in just the right amounts.

Even the future was bright for the people of the prairie plains. Had not our boys won a war to end war? Was not a new age of automobile and airplane transportation going to bring prosperity to the whole nation? Would not the whole world continue to demand wheat? Was not a new incomparable golden age of peace, prosperity, and progress at hand? And was there any reason to believe that the Lord would not continue to lavishly endow the Plains People? Would not the sun continue to shine, the soil continue to yield, and the rain continue to fall?

VI

"And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase." --Ezekiel 34:27

For Al Peterson, who had come to Dakota in order to have an opportunity to build, to grow, and to expand, life had been highly successful. The homestead had expanded beyond his fondest hopes into something to be proud of.

If Spink County had any aristocracy, the Petersons belonged to it. If Prairie Center Township had a leading family, the Petersons were it.

Al Peterson owned the biggest house in Doland. He had hired a special architect from Minneapolis to design it. It had a luxurious sunporch, a huge reception room, and a dining room that would seat twenty. Here the Old Folks retired from active farming although they still spent considerable time out on the farm.

Once he had planned to establish each son on a farm of his own. What he had forgotten when he made these plans was that "human nature is not a machine to be built after a model." Clifford now was a highway engineer and Guy worked in a factory in Chicago. That was their life; they were not farmers.

But Fred loved the farms as his father loved them. Even he had not at first been certain that he wanted to stay on the farm. He had gone to college, and had worked for the Government during the war. But after he married, he had decided that a South Dakota farm was still the best place to build a home and raise a family.

Jessie thought so too. Her father was a minister constantly moving from one church to another. Since they had never had a permanent home, she especially wanted a home for her family. Jessie was a good wife for Fred, a good home builder.

And the Peterson farm was a home second to none. There was a grove of Russian olives in the drive way. Set back from the road and framed by silver poplars, was the new frame house, completely modern and beautifully furnished. The barn had a capacity for twenty head of horses, fifteen milk cows, and 300 tons of hay.

The farm depression began in 1920, but it didn't seriously worry the Petersons. Neither were the crops so good during this period, but there was sufficient accumulation for the War boom to cushion this temporary difficulty. Most symbolic of Peterson's dauntless prosperity during this period was the fact that they proceeded to buy two eight passenger Studebaker cars, and "that ain't hay."

Saturday night was still the time to go to town, get the groceries, chat with the neighbors about crop prospects, and occasionally attend a movie. On Sunday morning the Petersons filled a whole pew in the Doland Methodist Church. Jessie, coming from a religious family, brought inspiration with her. She sang in the choir and taught a Sunday school class.

Pheasant hunting became a Sunday afternoon community enterprise in the fall. Ten or twelve farmers would spread out and walk down the length of a cornfield, chasing the pheasants before them to the other end of the field. Then as the pheasants came out of the corn field and were driven out of cover, there was ample opportunity for each hunter to make a good kill.

The State Fair came as a celebration of the completion of a year's work. Leaving a hired man in charge of the place, the whole family drove off merrily to Huron for a couple of days. The Fair was symbolic of the Gilded Age.

VII

"The whole nation has profitted by the courage and endurance of the people of the Plains." --Hugh H. Bennett

As the rains began to slowly taper off, and as the subsoil began to slowly lose its reserve of moisture, north-central South Dakota was in a particularly unfavorable position. Nebraska could still raise winter wheat and get it harvested in time to escape the hot southern winds. North Dakota was far enough away so that her spring wheat was relatively safe from the deadly southern blasts. But South Dakota was right in between.

Under natural conditions, the Plains had several reserves of moisture that helped to restore the balance during the dry seasons. One reserve was held by the beaver dams along the sluggish streams. Now the beaver had been killed half a century ago. There had been

scattered lakes and many potholes, all of which had been drained by the settlers whenever it was humanly possible to do so.

But the most important reserve of all was the subsoil and the sod. Now since the War, practically all the sod had been destroyed. The black silt acted like a blotter soaking up all the moisture from the subsoil and bringing it to the surface where it was greedily swallowed by the dry wind.

In the spring, miles of black, plowed fields lay exposed to the sun. Evaporation was intense so that an abnormal accumulation of humidity occurred, producing an abnormally hard rain storm.

But when the rain came, it did more harm than good. The spongy sod that soaked up rain and held the soil in place was gone. A new enemy, erosion, struck the people of the Plains. That rich black soil that nature had patiently built through the centuries began to wash into the rivers.

But worst of all was the wind. Always there had been a lot of wind on the Plains but during the dry years it increased three-fold. The soil that had been reduced to fine silt by years of careful cultivation had been broken into fine silt, drifted like desert sand.

To Dakotans, all this was incomprehensible. They had held their heads so high, had maintained an unsurpassed loyalty to their land and their State. They had sung at every community picnic and every country school program, "South Dakota, land of sunshine; under God the people rule." They had built homes and had made fortunes from this land; it could not fail them now. They had too much confidence in the future for the wind to blow it away in a few years.

The children of the third generation had early recollections of grown-ups watching the sky with troubled eyes. I remember my sister used to skip down the sidewalk singing over and over, "It's nice today and it rained today." A rainy day will always be a nice day to me.

After 1924, conditions became increasingly desperate, with one exception: 1927 was a good year.

I shall never forget 1927 because my people were happier that year than I have ever seen them since. 1927 was a kind of an Indian summer to the Golden Age.

My dad's farm produced the biggest yield in the township. It rained so hard that some baby ducks were drowned (the tragedy impressed me). We picked blue bells when we went after the cow up in the pasture barefoot. There were tadpoles in water pools beside the road. The garden grew beautifully. I was just big enough to be able to help Mother plant peas.

We went to Watertown shopping, to the State Fair sight-seeing, and to Lake Compeski swimming that year. It was a glorious Christmas, too. We went to Grandma's big house in Doland. The Christmas

tree in the hall was loaded with more presents than I had ever seen. My grandparents loved to play Santa Claus.

They were also very fond of roast goose, and we had roast goose that day. Grandmother ate all that she wanted, something that she hadn't dared to do for a long time. She had been on a close diet for four years.

The day after Christmas they took Grandmother to the hospital in Watertown. The next day she died. The gayness of 1927 was over forever. It was fortunate, though, that she died when she did.

We had a hired man named Jim who was practically a part of the family. When Dad couldn't afford to pay him any more, we knew it must be getting pretty bad.

I noticed how it affected my mother most, because I was most intimately associated with her. It was so difficult for her to understand because she had so much faith in God. How could He forget His people this way? The Plains People had not harmed anyone. They went to Church, they committed no terrible sins, they harmed no one. How could Jessie Peterson teach her children to have faith in times like these?

To Grandfather, it all seemed particularly fantastic. How could this country have worn out in a few years when in Europe people have farmed the same land for centuries? This country would surely come back eventually, but, in the meantime--in the meantime there were Fred and Jessie and the five kids.

So Al Peterson became obstinate, bitter, discontented with everything. He quarreled with Father about how to do the farming, he quarreled about how the cattle were fed, and finally accused Dad of cheating him out of some money. This was a re-enactment of the same quarrel that had occurred when Grandfather left Sweden. It had happened when each of the other Peterson boys left home. But this was the bitterest quarrel of all. It had to be bitter; otherwise Dad would not leave, and Grandfather felt that we had to leave. It was too late for him to tear up old roots and start all over, but it was not too late for the rest of the Petersons to start over.

We left him there, farming against the dust, wind, erosion, grasshoppers, hailstones, and Russian thistles. We left him there, a tired old man fighting the good fight to save the old homestead.

It was 1939 before my father was able to go back. Grandfather was 84 then, paralyzed on one side, and with both legs amputated at the knees because of poor circulation. A man who cannot comprehend the present must live in the past, and he was living in the past. It was difficult for him to understand that Fred and Jessie had changed so much in ten years.

"Go get my pants, Fred," he shouted. "Go get my pants, I tell you. We'll go see the fellow who took my place and see if you can farm it next year. This country is going to come back! It has to come back!"

People acted so strangely now days, he thought. Jessie was crying, and Fred was staring stupidly out the window at the deserted unpainted shacks that had once been Doland, South Dakota.

PYGMALION TONGUES

Why were they shocked when she jumped out of the window? Didn't they push her? Didn't they break her neck As much as the hard pavement? They dictated Her death as they had her life. She had the misfortune Of being born beautiful, and of living among idle people. They wanted to build something with their restless hands And empty minds that they could view in vacant minutes, And so they built a pedestal and propped her upon it. "See what an angel she is?" they asked. If that had been all She could have maintained her footing. But they weren't satisfied.

The pedestal wasn't high enough, so they added to it. No one consulted her. They weren't interested in finding out If high places made her dizzy. They erected another tower Of Babel, and it fell. They didn't disclose the fact That their tongues tore away the same foundation they had laid They saw perfection with their eyes and imperfection With their minds. She could not stand as a symbol For both. So she jumped from the tenth story. Her destruction rivaled their craft at construction. She could have lived a normal existence except that sharp tongues

Chose to chisel her life. When she stooped, weary Of the lonely pedestal, to mingle among the crowd, The hammers chipped away. She's better off dead. They do not realize that even the sea gulls, Kissed by the clean winds and spray, come down Occasionally to feed on the city dump and touch Their white wings against the debris of garbish heaps. But they will say: "Presumptuous thing! After all we did for her She flew too high--deserved a fall. But suicide! Who would ever have thought that. . .

Helen McDonald

SMOKED MEAT

By Jean Gordon

They were sitting on the porch of the store watching the cars go by, three girls with their dresses lifted to show their knees. It was evening and the street lights were just beginning to go on over the town. The cars as they passed made slushy "squishes" as they hit the rutted roads of the town and eased into second to climb the hill. The town was a flat, Western cow-town, gas stations, grocery stores and beer parlors, low slung, unpainted and depreciated by the weather. It was Saturday night after supper and the few people of the town were coming out to take the spring air. At the rise of the hill was the main grocery of the town, a mercantile, displaying coats, shoes, and canned goods all in a disorganized heap. The body proper of the store rested on solid ground, but the porch was built up on struts against the rise of the hill.

The girl on the left was light, her hair shaded to light and dark and light again. The girl in the middle was brown haired, with a pug nose, cute and freckled. The girl on the right was an Indian, dark, her black hair and high cheekbones emphasizing her black eyes and lipsticked mouth. Her name was June Sullivan and she lived in a shanty across the creek. Her mother was a full blood and her father an Irish Catholic who had come to the country when it was opened for homesteads.

The three of them were best friends. They went to high school together, pug-faced Mary whose father drove the school bus, Audrey whose father ran the gas station across the street, and June, whose father lived off his wife's allotment. They were sixteen and had had no taste of snobbery. They studied their algebra together, learned the words of the popular songs together and sat on Dobler's porch in the evening.

The evening bus came grinding over the rise and they watched it, looking hungrily at the people inside, wondering who they were, what they thought and where they were going.

June was wistful. "I'd like ta' get on that old bus and go just as far as it'd take me."

Audrey made an offering. "I went to St. Louis once with Ma and Dad."

"Yeah, but that ain't the same. Going with your ma and dad."
"I'd like to go all alone, and just get away from everybody."

Sometimes she didn't notice it, the level into which she was thrown, but sometimes she did. Like when she went up and knocked on Audrey's door and Mrs. O'Brien came out and saw who it was and said, "Sorry, Audrey isn't going out to play today." Or the time when Miss Jones took her aside at school and said, "I'm giving Jane the lead in the play. You were good, June, but you're just not quite the type it needs." Or when she walked out of the store and some of the men talked a little too loud. "Not bad for an Indian kid, is she?"

Those were the times she went and threw herself on her bed. And sometimes looked in the mirror with tears running down her face and tried to scrub a little of the darkness from her skin.

Those were the bad times, but most of it was good. The days at school, geography, arithmetic, and recesses. Recess time when she and Audrey and Mary would go out into the sunshine, lock their arms about one another and stroll up and down the board walks. It had little to do with the past, it was all future. "When they were older," "when they began to go to dances at the Pavilion," "when they got married," "What they would name their children." They would talk and think and soon their thoughts would come jumbling up into pictures inside their heads. It was good, the Saturdays and Sundays when they would go walking down the highway, or up into the woods, feeling the warm sun beating down upon their shoulders, the summers when they stayed all night up at the cabin and picked blueberries until the darkness of the evening blended in with the darker berries. The winters when they rode their sleds down the slope of the hill, easing their bodies caressingly into the sides to steer, feeling the clean sweep of the air and the joy of release. The Harvest Festival, the Jubilee, and Labor Day when they walked up and down the streets of the town, their new school shoes creaking just a little, and elbowing through the unaccustomed crowds.

Most of it was good, but it was never perfect. Like the nights she would leave Audrey's and go down to the house on the creek, smelling the stagnant smoke and the adherent tannin bark as she came down the path. Her mother inside, sitting, with her dark braids blending into the smoked up walls and darker shadows undisputed by the kerosene lamp on the table. Or worse, her mother's friends, sitting around like fat Buddhas, a little strange, half familiar, unintelligible. The smell of whiskey when her father came in, lingering like the threat of a dirty dust storm or an unconscious portent of evil. The Sundays at church, when she couldn't sit with the other girls, but came up from the creek to the Mission with the other Indians, part of them, watching them wind up the hill before like a procession from a DeMille movie. Or the dirty little white boys who followed her down the street yelling, "Yaaaay---Blackie!" Or the men who looked at her legs on the street and whose voices floated back after they'd passed, saying, "She's all right now, but wait'll she gets older. She'll be fat and sloppy like the rest of them."

Usually she didn't mention it. When Miss Adams read in the history books about Custer's Last Stand or the history of the state or something, she looked out of the window, assuming the pose. "This has nothing to do with me." Some of the Indians liked to talk about it though. Some of them were proud of it. Some of them got right up in class and said, "My grandfather was Chief of the Tribe," or, "My great-uncle fought with Sitting Bull at the Little Big Horn." It was better not to mention it at all, she thought. Just don't talk about it and maybe they won't think about it either.

She had become more philosophical as she grew older. She could keep up to any of the rest of them. She beat them in spelling, in arithmetic, and always had the best themes. "What does it matter?" she thought. "I'm just as pretty as they are. If I weren't here, maybe they'd think I was Spanish or something." And she would put

the powder on, thick and white, and run an experimental lipstick across her mouth.

Best of all were the Saturdays after supper. They would sit on Dobler's porch, soaking up the last warmth of the sun, and watch the lights come on. They would look down the hill into the valley and watch the lights go on at the Pavillion. They would watch the cars go in, single file over the cattle guard, and sometimes, if they listened hard, they could even hear the music. They played a little game sometimes, sitting on the porch. Maybe some night one of the cars would stop for them and they would hear,

"You girls like to go to the dance tonight?"

But it never happened. They sat and watched the cars go by, once in a while netting a whistle, and then, when the evening grew cool, picked themselves up and went home to dream of what it might be like someday.

Tonight June had felt it in her bones. She had put on a little more lipstick and wet her hair more carefully.

A car came up over the rise and slowed as it slunk past the store. It was dark and they couldn't see who was inside. Someone whistled out of its darkness. It turned down the alley and came up the other side. There were two boys and they both looked. But went past. Again it rounded the block and this time the brakes squeaked as it stopped. The driver leaned out. It was Bud Gray, one of the older boys who lived across town and had his own car.

"You girls goin' to the dance tonight?"

They were confused. They nudged each other and giggled.

"I dunno."

"Like to go?" He was looking at June.

"All of us?"

"Well-----I was gonna pick up some more kids...The car'll be pretty full. Come on, June, hop in!"

It had happened! The boys knew she was all right; just as good as anybody. It didn't matter after all. Her throat tightened and she jumped off the steps. She turned a deferential head.

"See you kids tomorrow."

She went around the back and Bud threw open the door. She climbed in between them. Bud eased into second and she looked back, triumphantly, watching Mary and Audrey still sitting on the porch.

"Ever been out to the Pavillion?"

It was hard to talk; she was too excited. Her voice squeaked. "Sure. Lots of times. Good old place, isn't it?"

"Yeah! Ya can sure have a good old time on Saturday nights out there."

She watched the posts speed by and felt the rough nap of the seat behind her back. She was in a car going to a dance with a boy. Bud Gray, of all people. She guessed she'd showed them! They drove around to the other side of town and picked up another boy and girl. Then they joined the procession going to the Pavillion.

It was hard to find a parking place. They had to park away on the outskirts of the clearing. Then they tramped out into the road, mounted the wooden steps, and they were there.

The Pavillion was a wooden structure, long and bare, with a smooth hardwood floor and a high, beamed ceiling. It was garish, the bright electric light hanging from the ceiling, the orchestra away down at the end, beating out the music. "Oh, Yes, you've Got Me. In the Mood. In the Mood!" The floor was already crowded. June looked around and said "Hi" to a few of the kids she knew as if she'd done it a million times before.

"Dance?" She and Bub began to dance. She wasn't scared of that part; they all knew how to dance around here. Had known ever since they'd gotten out of grade school.

She didn't talk, she couldn't. She fixed a bright smile on her face and kept it there. The faces whirled by in haze and she looked at the ceiling, seeing the remnants of draggled decorations from last New Year's Eve on the beams like gilded rainbows from a dazzled sky. It seemed the music never stopped. She was dancing with Bud, with someone else. "The Five O'Clock Whistle's on the Blink." Ta-dum-de-dum. "Diiiiiiinah! Is there anyone finnnnah!" "Hello, Tom. Fancy meeting you out here!" This could go on forever. She was like the other girls, dancing out at the Pavillion.

Then she found herself back with Bud. He looked at his watch. It was midnight.

"Let's go outside."

She was momentarily confused. They talked about girls who went outside. The nice girls stayed in at the dance until it was over.

"Let's stay in, Bud. Let's stay a little longer."

"Come on, June."

"Let's stay, Bud, please."

He changed his tactics. "I gotta run into town and get some cigarettes. It'll take just a minute."

She felt silly.

The air was fresh and cool. She felt it hit the sweat on her

forehead and felt the breeze go through her dress. They found the car and crossed the cattle guard. Bud turned the car towards town.

He looked down at her.

"Come on over closer."

She crawled over until the gear shift bumped her knees.

He began to drive with one hand, one arm across her shoulders, weaving in and out of the surge of oncoming cars.

"Crowded, isn't it?" She was struggling for conversation.

"Yeah! Too crowded!" He waited until a break came, then swung the car off onto a narrow dirt road.

"I thought you were going into town."

"Little detour I know."

He stopped at a wide place in the road about two miles further on. He tightened his arm and drew her over closer.

"Bud, you said you were going into town."

His voice was rough. "Are you kiddin'" Say, have you been around or haven't you?"

"Well sure I have, Bud. Sure. Only, I thought-----"

"Quit thinkin', kid. This is no time to think."

He put his hand beneath her chin and lifted her face. He kissed her. She could have cried. Was this kissing? Hard and rough until you felt as if your front teeth would cave in? It didn't look that way when Clark Gable did it in the movies.

She tried to draw away. He laughed.

"Hey, what do you think this is? Come to me, baby, come to me."

This wasn't what they meant by going to a dance and having a good time. This wasn't romantic. She looked up at Bud. His eyes were narrow and hard. Suddenly she hated him.

"Let me go." She pushed him hard in the ribs.

He held her off and looked at her. He laughed again.

"Well! Just who in hell do you think you are? When did your kind start telling me off? Smoked meat! A dirty little Indian! I like that!"

She felt as if the sky had fallen. As if the bright blue sky

had fallen down and broken up into a million jagged bits of glass, all pushing their way into her heart. She gasped a minute.

She began to cry. "Why did you pick on me?"

"'Cause you're a little Injun. All sweet and full of love."

"I'm not like that, I tell you. I never even went to the Pavillion before."

"Aw, shut up! You're all alike. I've been around."

It was as if she were surrounded by an iron wall, impregnable, without even a gate. There was no release now; it was like No Man's Land hemmed in with barbed wire.

She hardly knew when he started the car. When she opened her eyes, she was conscious of the long slope leading down to their shanty.

"I'll get out here."

"O.K. Have it your way. See you around."

She went stumbling down the slope. She could see the house silhouetted against the black trees and the flowing creek. She sniffed. She could smell it too. The tannin, the woodsmoke, the musty smell inside the house. She half ran the last few yards and at the doorway, rested a moment, leaning her head against the side of the slabs. She thought of tomorrow. Should she go over and see Audrey and Mary? After all, they didn't need to know. Things could be the same. She dug her hands into her face, and felt the warm tears trickle between her fingers. She wasn't that good of a liar. She'd cross the street if she saw them coming. She'd find someone else---more her kind,

She lifted her head and sniffed the air. It was warm and suddenly familiar. And strangely good.

ONLY THE WINDS

Paul on the road to Demascus
I on the road to hell
Was it a vision we saw?
Paul's not here to tell.

The fig tree relates the story
To wayfarers pausing near,
But only the winds seem anxious
To repeat the tale they hear.

Helen McDonald

POEMS

By David Perkins

GO LIKE CRAZY

Written for Vincent Van Gogh

Go
Like crazy men sometimes go
Run
In the sun
There is something to be done

and the night is near

Paint
Like crazy men only paint
In ooze...
Drink your booze
Take whichever girl you choose

Let them call you queer

Live
Like crazy men often live...
In pain
In the rain
With a fever in your brain

and a bandage on your ear

Rest
Like crazy men all must rest...
Sleep sound
In the ground
Underneath your grassy mound

You may sleep now without fear

TO AN OLD MAN

Cease regretting,
 Be forgetting
 All those things you have not done.
 You should have known from the beginning
 They were never worth the winning--
 Not one.

White your hairs,
 And your prayers
 Are longer now, and more devout:
 Pray to God with every breath!
 I may do the same, when death
 Is close about.

Your fault is not
 In being caught
 By webs that would-be wise men shun.
 Forget ambition; your release
 From burdens that the years increase
 Is something won.

HYMNS

I

Sing out your songs; once they are sung
 There is no need for living--
 No melody left to be giving
 The world. You, singer, are no longer young;
 The flats and sharps of broken harps
 Are useless soon, as rights and wrongs,
 But all is well: sing out your songs.

II

There are things of beauty yet,
 There are things of beauty yet...
 Chant this, chant it and forget
 The days which make it seem a lie.
 Let us chant now, you and I:
 Chant, for beauty still may die.

TWO SPEAK OF DEATH

This speaker flies in a fast plane...

Sure and always: the lights flash green red blue
 Even as always the spectral light in the dark
 Even as always a death in the night is forgotten

Men change in the faces: also the blood in its rushing
 It would be foolish to look at the steel and the flesh and compare
 You must not look at the living and think of eternity

Worship instead the steel and the rocks: defiers of time:
 Do not speak of a breath and the dead air together
 Also the kinship of flesh and of earth is not true

Sure and always: the lights flash green red blue
 Even as always the spectral lights in the dark
 The steel remains long after a death is forgotten

Today there is no time for sadness in the world

This speaker holds up Adam's profession...

Oh, I have buried many and the earth is clean!
 Hey! I have called to the wind and the sun both
 Often I have laughed with the pick in my hands

Six feet is a long way down to dig them
 Sure! and the sweat rolls and my shirt wet
 Quite a few shovelfuls of gravel must come out

Yeah! and I lay my lunch on a gravestone
 Wash down sandwiches with water at the noon
 Here lies our darling died a while back

Christ, how I hate to work in the blizzards!
 Me for the sweat and the summer sun hot
 Me for the pickhandle smooth and the dirt clean

Me for the rough box going down six feet quick

REGARD AN IMAGE

Regard an image in the stagnant pool:
 These lapsing ages in the sluggish dark
 Reveal chaos and fear. A fallen lark
 There floating, like a bloated, silent fool,
 Flaunts, instead of melody, decay
 Upon the air. Long shadows hide this brink
 And creatures of the night come down to drink
 When, horrified, the sunlight slides away.

Perhaps from feeling suddenly oppressed,
 And faintly sounding, as in stricken fright,
 A hopeless cry, the sickened wind in flight
 Seeks, lost and desperate, a place to rest.
 This earth too long has nourished unknown dread
 Instead of courage; courage at last is dead.

MARGARET, BELIEVE

No crystal, on no mountainside
 Elsewhere once felt the tremor of your stride:
 Believe it surely, after all,
 And let then live within you pride
 In your small self for that the fall
 Of ancient cities was not your affair.
 No other girl once knew the hair
 You now feel in the wind upon your face;
 You have not lived or dreamed in any place
 But this, not in another time,
 Not born to some forgotten race,
 Not kin to flesh that knew the burning lime
 Of other ages, other lands.
 Pass gently over Earth with your own eyes,
 And live beneath these unremembered skies
 With your own lips, with your own hands.

ESCAPE

More than shadows; this would seem
 A form too certain for a dream,
 Let dreams exist in madness things:
 The beat of dusty, feathered wings
 That leave behind in swirling air
 Visions, flashing, dying there--
 But leaving nothing meant for touch.
 More than shadows here, I say! Such
 Hungry, heavy, mid-night hours
 Harbor some weird shape which cowers
 In the dark and silent walks.
 As stealthily a tiger stalks
 The prey which has no strength to flee.
 Our souls leap up in sudden fear...
 Come away, now! Run with me;
 We must not be sleeping here.

SONNET FOR TODAY

We have forsaken mountains for this easy walking.
 Our hands are learning how to manage paper-weights.
 We are new pioneers: dreaming, talking,
 Building higher spires and wider states,
 Since now we know the value of blue steel
 And treaties signed in red ink with a pen.
 We have made much progress since the ancient wheel
 Was used by shaggy, long-forgotten men.

We are busy today in the world: there is much to be done
 And we are accomplishing things with cogs and wires;
 Even our fight with space is well begun,
 And we will someday prove that clocks are liars.
 Why should we look for death-clouds in the sky?
 We know we cannot take time out to die.

"From too much love of living,
 From hope and fear set free,
 We thank with brief thanksgiving
 What ever gods may be
 That no life lives forever..."

--Swinburne, "The Garden of Proserpine"

SESTINA; EMANCIPATION

I

Give us one taste of being really free
 And we will lose forever all our fears
 Of love and wounds and battle-smoke.
 Release us from ourselves; let us be bare
 Of every heavy chain that now binds deep
 Within our souls, imprisoning our strength.

II

There is no life in tightly-prisoned strength--
 No life to give us death. When strength is free
 (And this is what we dream of), then the deep
 And massive chords of love and all the fears
 That bring to us long life lie broken, bare.
 Then fears and loving vanish like a smoke.

III

When kisses of old loves have vanished, smoke
 Will float upon the air to prove our strength.
 Then, at last, will women soft breasts bare
 To no avail, and then our laughter free
 Will rise. We wait the coming day when fears
 And loves are plunged in acid hot and deep.

IV

We never really wanted to be deep
 In strong emotions nor in blinding smoke
 Of battle. We would rather use our strength
 To start a certain conquest of our fears
 And somehow yet (we dream of it) be free
 Of life itself. Then let the breasts lie bare!

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V

Like cottonwoods in winter, bare
Of leaves, yet proud, aloof, with long roots deep
In silent soil, apart from hope and free
From all ambition but to go as smoke
Up red-brick chimneys and to see their strength
Lie pure in ashes--let us lose our fears.

VI

We know the worst of all are quiet fears
That strip us of our pride and leave us bare
Of even our best hope--the final strenght
To plunge these bodies quickly into deep
And tideless death, and let our human smoke
Curl up from funeral pyres, wild and free.

VII

Though we have choking fears and useless strength
And yet love deep at breasts that women bare,
We dream of smoke on the wind to proclaim us free.

I MEET THE BOSTON PROLETARIET

by Walter King

I had been in Boston about ten days when I decided it was high time I find a job. Food was cutting into my wad, none too big to begin with, my room was not the most inexpensive I could have found, car fare was easing me out of my change, I had seen all the best movies, and besides it would be ten days before I could hope to get the new glasses. So I hied me off to the U. S. Employment Service where I presented my case with all possible tact. An obliging lady, one of the few human looking souls in the place, took me in hand, and after telephoning about, sent me off to Sears Roebuck and Co. I was glad to go. The mail order business had always aroused my curiosity. It would be rather nice to get some inside dope on it, I thought. Anyhow, I was getting lonely. I didn't know anyone. It was one way to get acquainted, so I thought, which shows how much I had learned about the Boston mentality.

One day was all I worked at Sears. Besides a low wage the work was incredibly dull, especially for an English major. All day I did nothing but fill bins full of wall-paper. Nobody talked to me, that is, in the friendly Western way I was used to. Of course the fellow who was in charge of me came up once in a while, but he had already forgotten my name, and called me MacArthur in lieu of anything better. Perhaps I did wear a belligerent look that day. At any rate after a day of that I determined that the sooner I got the hell out of there the better.

Next day being Saturday, which meant no work at Sears, I walked up the street a little way, Brookline Avenue, to be exact, just down a few blocks from Kenmore Square, and decided to try S. S. Pierce Co. My landlady had suggested it. "Everybody who is anybody in Boston buys his groceries from Pierce's," she said. So I decided to try it. If it fed the best stomachs in Boston, there might be a chance it could help feed mine. So I walked in, accosted the employment manager and walked out of the place with a job.

At the crack of eight the following Monday morning there I was at Pierce's ready for the slaughter. A little over-dressed to work in a war-house, as Pierce's turned out to be, but work-brittle and eager to make the grade. I was conducted to the second floor, where I was deposited on a chair to wait the appearance of the boss of the floor, a little indistinctive man with an absolutely expressionless face (I saw him smile once all the time I worked there), who, when he came up, sourpussed all over me and finally said he guessed he'd put me on the belt. That was all right with me. Anything was better than that chair right in the middle of everything with the whole army of drudges who worked there passing by and giving me the eye. The Boston eye. Cold, impersonal, indifferent, and pretending not to notice.

It turned out that all the orders for all the Pierce stores all over Boston were put up on the second floor, that is, all but

green groceries. A mass production system had been evolved to facilitate matters. Conveyor belts extended up and down the floor leading into two main belts, and on these all the groceries from baked beans to caviar were dumped, each peice tagged and numbered so that we who worked on the belt could in one fell glance snatch up what belonged to us and throw each item into one of thirty compartments in each of the four cars which were suspended from the ceiling in front of us.

Mr. X, the boss, led me through the slaves who were congregated along the belt, explaining the system to me in a monotonous voice that dripped with ennui. And then while my poor scholastic brain was trying to untangle his explanation into phrases that made sense to me, he suddenly introduced me to the straw boss of this section of the floor.

"This is Mr. G.," he said. "He'll show you the ropes."

"Glad to know you, pal," Mr. G. or Dick, as I subsequently got to call him, said. He was a slightly anthropoid individual with beady eyes that squinted rather when he fixated on anyone. "Be right with you." And he began to throw groceries into compartments with an abandon and a sureness of aim that would have done Joe diMaggio proud.

"O. K., pal," he said, when the hatch was finally completed. "Come along with me."

We climbed over the belt to the window side of the room, and he fell to explaining matters all over again. He had an accent that smacked unmistakably of the Bronx, although he was a native of Ireland he told me later, which explained a good many things about him that were not of Boston. His curiosity, for instance. Not that the proletariat of Boston does not have any curiosity. They have, but they pretend they haven't. They would rather swear than let you know that they are curious about something. And they don't like to swear, as I found out before the first week was over, unless they are in the privacy of a men's locker-room or a lavatory.

"Where you from, pal?" Mr. G. said after a while.

"Montana," I said.

"Gee," he said. His little beady eyes widened. Montana seemed as remote to him as the moon.

"What you doing in Boston?" he went on.

"Came to see an eye specialist," I said.

"Gee," he said again. And then, "How come you're working at Pierce's?"

"I like to eat," I said, "and Boston food is rather dear."

"You said it," he answered. "I know. I'm married. My wife's going to have a kid next month. I know all about it. How did you happen to get a job here?"

"I just asked for it," I explained.

"Gee," he ejaculated again. "Gee."

"Where you living?" he inquired, as soon as he had absorbed the wonder of it all.

"Bay State Road," I said.

"Gee," he murmured. "It must cost a lot for a room down there. Back Bay and everything."

"Oh, not so much," I replied airily, thinking of the signs advertising rooms for rent sprinkled all but wholesale throughout Bay State Road and even Beacon Street, hallowed Beacon Street of Brahmin fame. Back Bay Boston I had found in two weeks was far from the street it used to be, the street it was in William Dean Howells' day.

Oh course, all this while we were heaving canned goods and other groceries into the cars. I was rather bewildered by it all. The belt did not move fast, but the goods for one car invariably came by all at once, and then one had to dash madly up and down one's section of the belt retrieving stray items. It was impossible at such times to throw the goods into the proper compartment. The only thing to do was to throw everything upon the bench in back of one, and then in a quiet moment get caught up. I found myself doing more business with the bench than the car. My eyes bounced up and down the conveyor belt in a dizzy frenzy. My fingers ached from pawing canned goods. Even my feet hurt.

But there was a moronic fascination about the process. I could see that my colleagues to right and left had everything under control. If they can do it, so can I, I thought. And then I wondered why they didn't pay any attention to me. Not that I am anything to get excited about. But in the West you get introduced to a new man on the job as soon as possible, or if you don't, at least you talk to him, give him a suggestion or two concerning how best to handle the job. Or smile once in a while. But not in Boston. I might just as well not have been there for all the notice I received. If I asked a question, I got a civil answer, but it was in monosyllables. It was not too explicit either despite its brevity. Not that it was cold. It was just indifferent. However, the grocery business was all I could manage that day. Before long I was assigned a car of my own, one of the worst, as it turned out, and I was left to struggle along as best I could for the rest of the morning. I managed.

"You sure catch on quick," Dick said along about quitting time. "I been here for seven years, but nobody ever caught on so quick as you. It's a tough job."

"Yeah?" I said, thinking of pulling ribes and fighting forest fires.

"You don't look like you ever done any hand work before either," Mr. G. Volunteered, looking at my well-pressed pants and neatly-tied necktie.

"Did you ever fight forest fires?" I asked.

"No," he said and winked. He caught on quickly himself sometimes.

And so the day went. One batch went by after another, and I struggled along in my shell, the shell the Boston proletariat insisted I wear. And all went well, until a gallon jug of molasses came floating by. It belonged to me, it and a lot of other gorceries that were traveling en famille, so to speak, to somebody's belly. Somebody had told me to be sure to get all the jugs, even if something else had to be missed. So manfully as an ancient Greek, who saw his duty before him and did it, I grabbed the molasses jug, letting fall an armful of soap flakes, and hustled it into the proper compartment. Mine was the true zeal of the typical Alger boy. Success or bust. Only it was the molasses jug that broke. Broken glass and molasses slithered all over the compartment and down the belt. I was horrified. What a mess. And what to do? Finally after that moment that seems like ten years had gone by, I asked the fellow next me what to do. He was a red-haired individual with an outstanding dose of acne besmearing what might otherwise have been a rather good-looking face. He had a ready tongue and before I could draw breath again, had hollered to Dick to turn off the belt.

"I did it," I said. George Washington after the cherry tree incident had nothing on me.

The boss looked at me a moment and then went his way. It was hard to tell whether weariness or disgust was more pronounced in the look he shot at me. But he didn't can me. I could go on enjoying the honor of working for Pierce's. I breathed easier. And promptly broke a bottle of catsup during the next batch. But on the floor, not on the belt. It was a bloody mess, but I skipped around it until I had time to clean it up. Nobody paid any attention to it, so why should I?

Succeeding days proved to be much the same. Nobody paid any attention to me but Dick. He took a paternal interest in me; suggested places where I could get better meals for less money, how much I ought to pay for this and that, and constantly marveled that I was residing on Bay State Road, the stronghold of plutocracy to him. Which exemplifies one facet of the state of mind of the Boston proletariat, although Mr. G. was not strictly of the Boston species. Yet he had absorbed a considerable portion of their beliefs and this was one, as I found out later, when I eventually got somewhat acquainted with my fellow drudges. Back Bay meant the district of the swells to them. It never occurred to them that the majority of

the social element of Boston had long since migrated further out into the suburbs, that the majority of the houses in the district had long since been transformed into rooming houses. Back Bay was as remote from them as heaven is to the erring sinner. It never occurred to them that times had changed and Back Bay with it. So I went on being a scion of the well-to-do to them, out working just for a spree, a sort of one man slumming party getting a glimpse of the other side of the tracks.

This misapprehension didn't bother me much. But the indifference of those around me did. Nobody knew my name or even tried to find out what it was. I was just "pal" or "Montana". I did my job and went off by myself. No one tried to get acquainted. It would have been a sin against their code, a code they enjoyed unconsciously but all the same stubbornly. It was very odd. To someone like me raised in the West where friendliness is as natural as snow in winter it was frighteningly odd.

No one knew what my first name was until the third week, when one of the fellows finally asked me. Dick had forgotten he ever knew. My Back Bay residence had obscured anything so vital as a name. He was really surprised when he rediscovered it himself. "Walter," he said, "so that's your name. I thought I'd heard it once, but I couldn't be sure. But what's in a name?" Nothing, I thought, but a sensitive ego.

After a couple of weeks had gone by, my colleagues on the belt began to say good morning and good night to me. And a few words in between. They even began to give me more detailed information when I asked question. I hadn't given up that habit, even after my first frustrated attempts at stimulating conversation. I had a curiosity about the business that I couldn't restrain. And who could, I ask you, when Dick was constantly hollering down the alleys and across the floor for Mrs. Scully, whoever she was, or bellyaching because IJ was slow with the canned fruits in her alley, or that the "flouah and sugah" was slowing things up. Or that MN wanted some more pans or QR hadn't thrown on its block. All these things demanded answers, and little by little I got them, although to this day I have no idea who Mrs. Scully was or where she worked.

I was also beginning to have trouble with the Boston proletarian accent. It all began when they found about my name. Now I don't think that Walter is any great shakes of a name, but it is bearable, or was until I went to Boston. There it became Waaaaaltuuuuuh, as though one were waying it with a mouth full of backed beans. As a name it became almost impossible to my sensitive, western-trained ears. Consequently I began a campaign to have it shortened to Walt, which they could mispronounce, according to my ideas of pronunciation, less easily. But they never did catch on. And by the time I left it was still Waaaaaltuuuuuh. I began to wonder why I hadn't been christened Moses.

Their whole system of phonics, I discovered, is built on a different basis from that we use in the West. Modeled on that of the upper strata of Boston society, which is an imitation of the upper crust style of speech in England, it reached absurdities at times

which all but encouraged me to choke the nearest soul to me. "Flour" was flouah", "sugar" was "sugah", "sure" was "shooah", "sister" was "sistaah", "for" was "foah", "Harvard" was "Havad" (a as in ass), "come here" was "come eeah", "shorts" was "shots". It used to leave me dizzy.

After they got to know me better one of them in a daring moment asked me what I thought of the East; didn't I find it rather different from the West. Indeed I did and I told him so, mentioning the language difference. He blinked at me. "Well," he said. And let it go at that. But a little later he told me. "You sound a little funny to us, you know." It was my turn to laugh. I had already thought of that and had been wondering if he would.

But eventually one fellow did come along with whom I could be outright friendly. He was Boston all over, with one difference. He was interested in something besides Boston. Boston was the hub of the universe to him, as it was to all the others, but all the same he realized that there was a little something to America outside New England. He'd even been to New York a couple of times.

He was an Irish fellow, a few years older than I rather round-faced, had a sense of humor and a curiosity he was not ashamed of. "What's it like in the West?" he asked me one day, and all about the country, the mountains, the wild life, the fishing, the lakes, what I did in the summer, where I went to school. It was what I had wanted to talk about. And I could ask him questions about the East that I had been storing up. He would tell me about swimming in the bay when he was a kid, boating in the Charles, the various jobs that he had worked at (he had worked at Sears one day too). I began to look forward to the off moments we had every now and then when we could talk together, especially after point rationing went into effect and business took a hasty plunge toward zero. He was the only friendly person on the whole belt, that is, the friendly kind I was used to in Montana. He even asked me what was my last name. When I left, I think he was the only one on the belt who knew what it was.

I asked him one day why Boston people were so indifferent. Even he was a little surprised.

"Why, we're not," he said, "not indifferent. We're just minding our own business."

"Aren't you overdoing it?" I suggested.

"Maybe," he said. "But then that's Boston. It's always been that way. We're just used to it."

"It's a helluva way to be," I said.

He just laughed. I had to too. He was a nice guy.

Finally came my last day. I didn't tell anyone but the boss that I was leaving. I didn't think the rest would care, except maybe Tom, the friendly fellow, and I figured I'd tell him late in

the afternoon. But he was called up to work on shorts, so I told one of the other fellows instead. Word spread around fast and I was deluged with queries about the trip home. I was bewildered. The sudden flash of interest was disconcerting. Maybe they like me after all. I began to wonder if I had misjudged them. Perhaps they were human. But just before quitting time one of the fellows came up to me and said,

"So you're going back to Montana and ride all the horseys!"

I looked at him.

"What did you say?" I asked.

He repeated his question. All my new-found faith in the Boston proletariat began to vanish.

"There's more to Montana than horses," I said. "I've never ridden a horse in my life." Which was not strictly true, but true enough considering the few times I had.

"Why, I thought Montana was just cow-towns and ranches and everything," he expostulated.

I began to feel mean.

"You know," I said, "we're provincial in Montana. I have to admit it. But at least we realize it and try to do something about it."

"Hey, your're getting me all wrong," he began. "Why--"

"Last batch," Dick shouted in his Bronx brogue.

I was saved from further explanations.

A few minutes later we were through and after a round of handshakes I was off looking for Tom to say good-bye. I found him down one of the alleys looking for the mushroom soup. He was new on shorts and didn't know the location of all the stock.

"I'm leaving tomorrow," I told him. "I just came up to say good-bye."

I was going to tell him how much I had enjoyed talking with him when I decided it would sound a little slushy. He wasn't that kind of a guy, and neither was I really. So I just held out my hand.

"It's been fun," I said.

"Yes, hasn't it?" he said. He had a firm hand-clasp, the kind I like.

"Well, so long," I said, "See you in Montana."

"Sure," he said, walking down the alley with me. "You know," he began, as I was about to leave him, "I sort of wish--"

He stopped short. "Oh, well, it doesn't matter."

We shook hands again, and I left. He was a nice guy, the Western kind.

I don't suppose I'll ever see him again.

TWO POEMS

Cathedrals built of thought
 Possess no Sabbath
 Know no Sunday toll of bells
 For who would come to kneel
 On bended knee?
 None but the mason and only he
 To thank some lesser thought
 For bringing his tranquillity.

If you should return to this valley,
 This isolated land,
 I'd walk around the earth with you
 To find forgotten sand
 Where we'd forget the African campaign,
 Murder of Lidice, Dakar, El Al Amain.
 The words sharper than knife
 Sharper than blade,
 Of those who said
 (Triumphantly)
 That you were dead.

A.C.

SANKARI --THE GREAT ONE

By "Kerttu Eronen"

Erkki Eronen liked the warmth of the April morning sun on his bent back as he turned over shovelful of rich, dark earth. Perhaps Liisa had been right. Perhaps it was too early to begin the garden. The soil still held some of the stiffness of the winter's frozen sleep and he had to step heavily on the spade to slice into it. Ah, but the fragrance of spring was in the air--in the tangy odor of burning leaves, in the fresh odor of the muddy, rising river, in the delicate odor of sap running in the pines and cottonwoods, in the blending odors of the new grass and the fresh loam just turned to the sun. Why, listen to the birds--meadowlarks, bluebirds, robins, sparrows. They knew it was spring. They were already starting to get their plans for home, family, and food underway. Yes, he was wise like the birds and he had many plans to put into action. Look how large his domain was growing. It takes many days to plow up seven lots for planting. No, it was nine lots now with those two across the street that he had just bought. He would plant potatoes there, he thought. Well, it wasn't anything like the old Eronen estate in Finland yet--the acres upon endless acres of land, parts of which he had surveyed for the first time. Forests, lakes, wheat fields, reindeer herds, all on that one estate. But these nine lots were his own. He had filled them in with rocks, dumped countless loads of fertilizer on them, plowed, planted, harvested. Yes, he thought, he was a pretty good provider at that. Brought up three boys and a girl and had a girl in high school now. The boys had had high school, the girl had had college training. Education wasn't ever wasted even though Mr. Gorman had told him that he was only wasting his money and that he would never get any of it back. Well, his sons remembered their education and the garden produce and the mine work was enough to keep the three of them left at home going and perhaps send the girl to college, too. Yes, and that girl would do things too. She had the Eronen blood in her, that girl. She wrote poetry and music too. Some day she would write words to the songs that she had composed. He lifted his head and listened to the spring--meadowlarks, the river-song, the soft wind. His sharp blue eyes narrowed as he cocked his head thoughtfully. Yes, that would make a lovely melody. Violins would play it first and then it would swell with the strong beat of the drums and the deep vibrations of the bass. Yes, he must get that down on paper, that stirring minor melody. He straightened his rounded shoulders and pulled his small, wizened body to its greatest height, stretching to the spring. Melody of Spring by Erkki Eronen, Sankari. Tum ta ti taa ti tum.

"Erkki, come now to eat. Kerttu already is here. Food is on the table." Liisa's call interrupted Erkki's reverie.

"Yes, yes, I am coming. Quickly I come." He put away the shovel, still thoughtfully mumbling to himself, Melody of Spring, tum taa ti taa ta tum.

"Father, father. Come now quickly. We are waiting."

Erkki smiled at the girl who called to him. She spoke in the soft accents of the Finnish tongue and he took great pride in the fact that she spoke in the literary language and not some backwoods dialect. He had taught her a cultured language. And she knew the American language too. Yes, that girl would go places.

"Well, and what now are we eating?" The small kitchen table was covered with a great variety of dishes--salted salmon, cheese, crackers, oranges, bread, soup poured into bowls, buttermilk, apple pudding. Yes, Liisa knew how to set a table so there was something to eat on it.

"What in school today did you learn, Kerttu?" Erkki asked as he tested the soup.

"Oh, in Latin class we read Caesar. It was something about 'Gaul...'"

"Yes, yes, wait. Surely I know how it goes. 'Gaul was divided into three parts..' Doesn't it like that go?"

"Why, yes, father. How did you Caesar know?"

"Well, that's how I fifty years ago learned it from Haska, my old tutor. Not much do things change evidently, eh? Come now, drink that buttermilk. Good for you. What else did you learn?"

"Oh, in General Science we talked about atoms and molecules. Father, never did I know how complicated it all was. When you think of how millions and millions of them are in everything." Erkki stopped, his fork poised in mid-air. There was something foreign to him in the air. He steadied himself to combat it.

"What? Millions and millions of what? What do you talk about?"

"Well, it's a little hard to exactly say, father. Atoms are very small and many of them make molecules and then there are elements and compounds and.."

"Well, well. Never have I heard of them. That you call seence, eh? Doesn't it mean some kind of knowledge?"

"Yes, father. It's science and in it is studied about all kinds of things like--well--like how everything is made and how everything goes."

Well, well, how was it that he, Erkki, had never heard of these strange things? They sounded quite important. Why hadn't Haska told him about them? He had learned about Caesar and geometry and history. He had learned many things and Haska had told him he was ready for the University. Well, this must be something new. Yes, always something new to learn about.

"Hear you that, Liisa, how our girl is everything learning? Maybe we don't know much, eh?"

"Well, I guess we lived a long time and didn't know everything. But it is good, it is good that Kerttu should know about all things like that."

"Yes, surely." Yes, it was good that Kerttu should know. Everyone should know. How much more there was to learn now than when Haskas had taught him. Well, he had learned a few things. They would have to do now. He had managed to live and earn bread and butter with what he had learned. He didn't have time to worry about molekuuls anyway.

"Say, Liisa, that cold pork roast. Where is it? I think I would like some."

"Erkki, all those things on the table and you always have to find something else that you want."

"Well, we have it, don't we, and it has to be sometime eaten. There should be lots of everything on the table so that a person can eat what he feels like. I guess we can afford to eat what we want to. Won't you go now to get it, Liisa? There's a good girl."

Liisa went off mumbling to get the desired pork roast. "Always tries to live like a king."

"I have a new song Kerttu--a Melody of Spring," Erkki went on enthusiastically. "I want that you write some words for it when I get it on paper. The composing team we will be--Kerttu and Erkki." His eyes twinkled in contemplation of the phrase.

"Oh, that reminds me, father, We were today in music talking about harmony. You know--chords to make many notes sound at the same time. So you hear chords when you compose?"

"Well, yes, I guess so." Erkki nodded thoughtfully, his eyes puzzled. Armony, armony. He'd never heard of such a thing. How had he missed that? Why he had played three or four instruments before he was twelve. It must not be anything so important if he could get along without it. He felt himself growing irritated with these foreigners in his mind. Did it mean that he didn't know how to write music? Nonsense! His Spring Song was real. He had heard it so plainly. Maybe the armony would make it better though. He had thought often himself of what notes the bass could play in accompaniment. But the melody was the important thing anyway and he had a Spring Song.

"No, I really don't know enough to write music like that. But let us do this. You can write the armony for me. How's that eh?" He winked confidently but he felt he had delivered the death sentence to the Spring Song. It was no longer his. This foreigner Armony had captured it and torn it to shreds. Armony laughed in his face and dangled the helpless notes on strings before him. He hadn't had the strength, the wisdom with which to hold it. He hadn't had anything to fight back with except a sound in his ears

growing fainter until it died out.

"Kerttu", Liisa was saying, "why did you this morning put on your good dress. Look, you already have dirt on it. Why can't you wear your other clothes? They are good, warm clothes."

"But, mother, they aren't the kind other girls wear and I don't get to very often wear this dress anyway."

"Well, well," Erkki's eyes gleamed a warning impatience. What was all this bickering going on about. Couldn't a man eat his lunch in peace any more? "Why, then, don't you get some good clothes like the other girls. Here, here's some money. Buy yourself a whole outfit." He pushed the bills to her and lowered his head to apply himself to the soup. His girl would wear as good clothes as any of them.

"But Erkki," Liisa protested, "weren't you with that going to pay the taxes?"

"Oh, I'll get paid soon again and the garden makes money for us. Christ, if the girl needs clothes she has to buy them, doesn't she? It's time for me to go to the mine. Is my lunch bucket ready?"

"But, Erkki, you didn't eat much."

"Not very hungry. Have to go."

Erkki mumbled to himself as he walked, heavy-footed and bent-shouldered to the mine. Molekuuls. Was even this air about him heavy with them? Is that what was pushing down on his shoulders, making it difficult for him to drag the cumbersome mining boots along? Perhaps. How could he know. Well, he would have to look at Kerttu's books and try to figure it out. No, the thought was repulsive. Those queer words after words making no sense at all and totally unpronounceable. Why didn't he learn the language his daughter knew? Why must he forever remain ignorant? Fifty years ago he wouldn't have believed there was anything in the world he couldn't learn. Fifty years ago he had come to America, the land of opportunity to get an education, to go to a university and become a writer or composer. Universities for the immigrant. Universities when the coal mines had been hungry for picks and shovels. Universities for the ignorant, the illiterate, the poor! Yes, he had learned where he belonged--in the black bowels of the earth with a pick in his hands. Christ, and even now the damned fool was talking about Spring Songs. Here there wasn't money to pay the taxes and he worrying about molekuuls and armony and spring songs. Spring Songs! Jesus Christ, what a damned fool!

The black of the mine gaped from the hillside, demandingly hungry. The first time he had gone into a coal mine he had sworn he could never go down again. The cold dampness had seeped into his bones, the fine dust had sifted into his nostrils and lungs, the pick handle had dug raw sores into his palms. He had sworn

he would go back to Finland--that he would not stay here to become a slave to King Coal. He had meant to work just long enough to get money for return fare but the time had never come. Christ, he had been a sissy. Now look at his hands. Shapped to curve around the pick handle, gnarled and twisted, heavy blue veins showing through the too thin skin. He, Erkki Eronen, Sankari! Jesus Christ!

Mike, a huge Irishman, was waiting in the tunnel. "Hey Fin, hop along, We have lots of coal to shovel on this shift."

"Yess, yess, joost a minjute. Vat's all ta roosh for, eh? Can't you see I'm komink, you roundheadt?" Erkki would have liked to have heaped hot coals of abuse on the dummy's fat head but somehow he couldn't make his mouth speak the profane American words. Strong Finnish words were all right but those words the miners used at Jake's Pool Room seemed somehow too common. It irritated him that he couldn't make the Irishman understand his own curses.

"Well, and what could be the matter with the Fin today. Sure and you look like it was going to be Judgement Day Tomorrow."

"Mebee it iss." Erkki picked up the pick and bent double to enter the room that he and the Irishman worked in. Christ, such dumbbells. Such dodering fools. Didn't they see anything? Had this penetrating dust clogged their eyes and ears wholly? Were they content to stand there in water to their ankles, hitting their heads on the ceiling every time they straightened their backs, picking, picking, picking at the wet glistening, black wall day after day, year after year? Didn't they ever get sick of figuring up pennies for taxes, rent, clothes, food from every pay check? Why couldn't they see that something had to be done? Didn't they know they were slaves? But, no, they thought they were free men, free Americans. Yes, free to kill their minds, their senses, their bodies. Erkki's pick slashed into the black rock. There's one for the dust, there's one for the cold water, there's one for the smell of carbide, there's one for the poor Irishman, there's one for the taxes, and here's one for the Melody of Spring and Erkki Eronen--Erkki Eronen the fool--the ignorant, romantic old fool! He was suddenly exhausted, sick. God, there was no hope, no hope. The glistening black seemed to be closing in, the water tugging at his ankles. He wiped cold sweat from his forehead and shuddered. Jesus Christ.

Suddenly the sound of voices and the crunch of many feet broke the silence of the mine. Erkki and the Irishman went to see who it was. A man in a fur coat, ear muffs, and hip-boots was leading a string of twelve or fourteen year old kids. His words accompanying grave pointing at the sides of the tunnel were drowned by the voices of the kids all jabbaring excitedly. What business did they have here anyway? The man caught sight of the miners.

"I," he explained, "am J. T. Johnson, principal of the grade school. I've brought these children down here to look for fossil patterns on the walls of your mine. Would you mind showing our

children around a little?"

The kids were suddenly wide-eyed and quiet. Erkki looked at J. T. Johnson. Fat-head. Fur-coat. Hip-boots. Ear-muffs. What did he think a mine was for? Didn't he know that the miners are paid by the carloads of coal they can turn out in a day? In an hour they would loose at least two cars. Damned fools.

"Sure, and we would be happy to do that. Come in, maybe you will find some here. I don't know as I kin show you any--ah, what was it?"

"Fossils--patterns of leaves in the coal. Why, here's one right in front of us. Come children. Do you see those fine lines etched into the coal. Millions of years ago those were ferns."

The kids were crowding around. The Irishman stood by open-mouthed. Jesus Christ, what were they making such a fuss about a few lines in the coal for. All those kids taking in all that stuff about fossils. And that simpering Irishman. So that's what they thought a mine was for.

"That was very interesting. Thank you for showing us around. We'll have to go now. Any more questions children?" J.T. Johnson was adjusting his ear-muffs, preparing to make his exit. But one tousel-headed, wide-eyed kid timidly lifted his voice.

"I-I would like to know a little about how the miners live down here."

Erkki looked at the kid. He was a bright-looking chap. A little like his own grandson. Fine boy, that grandson. Why shouldn't the kid know how they live in this damn hole. He, he would have to tell the bright-eyed kid a few things about "how they lived".

"Yess, 'course you want to know 'bout ta mine. Kum here, kit, I vill show to you how ve miners livf. I havf live in dis mine now tirty year. Yess, mebee I shouldt know how miners livf. Now, vat you tink tat iss?" He swung his arm in the direction of an apple box at the opening of the room. The kids eyes popped. Sure, he, Erkki, thirty years in this mine, would tell them about it. They wouldn't go away thinking a mine was a place for growing fossils.

"Why, it looks like an apple box, doesn't it?" The kids were all puzzled. Erkki grunted.

"Apul-box, eh? No, tat iss no plain apul-box. Tat iss aur bu-ti-ful dinink-room taple. Tat's right, kits. Tat's vere I for tirty years, every night, eat my suppure." Thirty years. God, could they understand! Thirty years eating off of an apple-box. J. T. Fur-coat looked somewhat amazed but the kids were gathering around him, looking at him with bright, imaginative eyes. He would tell them.

"Yess, ve havf a vit tapleclot, too, and ve put on that aur

silvere." He wished a miniature fork and spoon from his lunch pail and opened a jack-knife, brandishing them dramatically. The kids were getting into the game. J. T. and the Irishman were out of it. Sure, he was telling them about the mine.

"Tat in dere is aur livink-room and kichen togetere. Ronink waters too, eh? Und lamps ve can moovf anyplace. Out dere", said he striding out to the tunnel agin and gesturing broadly up the narrow passage, "is aur hall. Longgest von you evfer see, I bet, eh? No house, wit hall like tat." Sure, the kids were laughing now. Some of them knew him and they were telling the others who he was. Sure, he Erkki Eronen. He played in the city band with some of them. They knew who Erkki was. He liked the kids. He liked to look at their bright eyes and soft features. They knew what he was talking about. They saw the dining room table and hall and livingroom. He knew how to show a mine to kids.

"Und see, ve havf no scraps aroundt our house. Ve havf ta serevants. Mouses, yess. Very goodt serevants." Erkki's eyes twinkled as brightly as the kids. It was a pretty good game.

"That was all very interesting, Mr. -ah, -but," J. T. was embarrassed, "Children, thank the men now and come along. We must get back soon." The kids didn't like it much. They grumbled.

"Now, ve would givf you a free riddt back to school in aur own streetcar but ta streetcar man iss not vorking right now. Kom back, Kits, kom back to see aur house again sometime." They promised to come back. Of course, they would come back. They had seen things they couldn't have imagined existed in this black hole-- dining room tables, lamps, kitchens, white tablecloths. Erkki felt a warmth filling him as he watched the kids disappear down the tunnel. They were good kids. Some of them might grow up to be great writers and composers. Would they remember and come again down the long hall? Yes, sure they would. They were good kids. Some of them would go places.

"Hey, Fin. Sure and what are ya dreamin' about now. Get to work with that pick."

Erkki frowned and cocked his head. Let's see, how was it now? Tum ta ti. Yes that was it. Tum ta ti taa ti tum. Absent-mindedly he began to sway the pick to the music. Catching himself, he laughed outright. Well, the old pick didn't make such a bad baton. He marched dramatically back into the room. Tum - ta - ti- taa- ti - tum. Melody of Spring by Erkki Eronen, Sankari.

BARNYARD SKETCHES

by Leroy Aserlind

One morning in my ninth year, I awoke in a strange bed, in a strange room, with a strange view out of the window. Well, there I was, on the farm. How I got there makes no difference, really. I was there, and no doubt about it.

It was just an ordinary farm, a few ramshackle buildings, a few new ones, rusty machinery every place you looked, smells, horses, cows, chickens, a white farmhouse, a couple of stunted trees, a half-hearted attempt at a lawn, and a beautiful barn. It was pretty typical of any North Dakota farm.

The one distinctive feature of this particular farm was one of the inhabitants, my cousin Carlos. He was one of those people who are forever getting into trouble. Nothing malicious in his makeup, just a love of good clean, honest fun, fun which always led to trouble. Right from the start I knew we were going to get along.

Carlos' biggest fault was a speech impediment. He couldn't pronounce his L's. There was a body of stagnant water not far from the house which he told me was "Mawwer's Swoo". I called it Mawwer's Swoo for the next seven years, often wondering at the origin of the strange name. Two years ago I got a letter from him telling me that he had got his limit of ducks at Mallard's Slough, and I finally realized the correct name of the place. But I still call it Mawwer's Swoo, out of habit and affection.

Carlos and I stayed pleasantly busy and amused for the next three months. One time we got fifty crabs and put them in the cupboard and milk cooling troughs. Once we put two milk crates together, then put two tomcats inside and pinched their tails. The result was a wonderful fight. Nobody ever suspected who put the vinegar in the horse trough, or who fed the pigs too much skim milk, burned down a haystack in the east pasture, or set mousetraps baited with corn in the chicken yard. Yet we always got the blame and suffered the consequences.

With the advent of school, our farmyard activities ceased temporarily. I remember well the first morning heading into town on the school bus. It was loaded with a lot of Bohemian boys ranging in age from six to twenty. I struck up a conversation with a boy named Isidore. In the course of our talk, he told me that he could bite nails in two. I naturally being a bit skeptical, bet him six apples that the stunt was impossible.

I didn't know Isidore. Next morning on the bus he bit a nail in two and I lost the apples. For the rest of the year, every time he wanted an apple he would bite a nail in two for me, and I, never tiring of the stunt, would always pay him off.

Every morning at six o'clock I would have to get up and dress

by a red-hot pot-bellied stove, and many was the time in bending over to put on some article of clothing that my bare behind came in contact with the stove, sending me running into the bathroom to put some salve on the afflicted part. Every time this happened, I vowed to dress in the cold corners of the room, but about the time the burn healed up, I was back hugging the stove again and getting singed.

I remember waking up on the morning of my tenth birthday and hearing the wind howling outside the house, and seeing the snow seeping in through the cracks around the windows. Unless one has seen or been through a real North Dakota blizzard, he can't begin to imagine the ferocity of the wind or the sting of the cold. It was so bad that day that the school buses couldn't run, and I got a day of vacation from school as a birthday present. The next day, instead of the usual yellow bus with "School" and "Slow" plastered all over it, we were taken to school in some sheepherder's chuck wagon which had been placed on sled runners, drawn by two horses. Everyone sat huddled on the straw floor and moved only when the lurching of the "school bus" necessitated it. All the girls sat on one side and the boys on the other. No one said a word, as we were all scared with the newness of the thing, or just too blasé to let anything affect us. That is, all except the indomitable Isidore, who, having gone through this sort of thing before, was telling wild tales of the wagon getting lost and **everyone** going for days without food. It all seemed frighteningly possible in those particular circumstances. But we got there safely in that weird contraption that morning, and for many mornings after that when the roads were impassable to the regular bus.

School there was just the same as any place in the United States, the same shiny faces, the same upraised hands, the same cluttered bulletin board. About the only thing out of the ordinary in the classroom, besides Isidore, was the post office we had in the back of the room. Our teacher, in order to discourage note writing, had one of the girls bring a huge packing crate to school. In this we sawed a window and installed bars, so that, with a little paint, it really resembled a post office. Inside there were envelopes on which each student had his name written. Whenever anyone wanted to write a note, he did so, and mailed it in the mail slot; and the postman the next day would put it in its correct envelope. That's all there was to it. It never stopped note writing, though.

On winter Saturdays when it was too cold to help our uncle and the hired men cut ice above the dam, we would play in the barn with the cats. There were two groups, the "Engine House" cats and the "Cellar" cats. Of all these "Old Lady Woods" was the venerable mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and so on indefinitely. She was a remarkable old veteran of approximately fourteen years. By this time she had been kicked by every cow on the place, chased by every dog, and once, after my cousin had heard the Biblical story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, she had been cast into the fiery furnace. Luckily she only got a few hairs singed at the time.

The canine part of our farmyard menagerie was represented by Pinnichio and Crookside. Crookside was so named because as a pup

he had sustained an injury which left him decidedly crooked. Everywhere he went, he seemed to be going at a tangent. Pinnochio, who had a long nose, met his demise that winter at the hands, or I should say hooves, of an angry horse.

On long winter nights the whole family, my mother, my cousin, his mother, two more aunts, six uncles, three hired men, and my grandmother, would sit around the long dining room table, while my grandfather would read the Bible to us a chapter at a time. During the winter I became an intimate friend of Peter, Paul, Joseph, Joshua, and Job. The Bible seemed like an interesting story in a current magazine the way my grandfather read it. After the Bible reading, the whole clan assembled in the music room where the hired girl would play the piano and we would all sing, whether we knew the words or not. We always had lots of volume at any rate.

The winter passed, and with the coming of spring, once again my cousin and I started finding ways to give off our pent-up energy. For instance, there was the time we decided to take up smoking and chewing, both at the same time. We started in on a cigar, and by the time it was half finished, we were too. Our biggest mistake in chewing was swallowing the vile tobacco juice. That night we were sent to bed without any supper, a fitting punishment, considering that we couldn't have possibly eaten a mouthful anyway.

It was in the spring of this year that I caught my first fish. I had fifty yards of braided Japanese silk line, three hooks, and a steel pole I had never used. One day my youngest uncle said he would take us fishing. He took twenty yards of my line, gave Carlos twenty yards of my line, and magnanimously let me have ten yards of my line. Somehow or other I got a hook out of the deal, and my uncle very generously cut me a willow to use as a pole. We sat up on top of a dam and let our hooks drift in the water below. Mine wouldn't reach the water, but that didn't bother me; I held the pole there anyway. Carlos and my uncle each caught a couple of catfish down there, and still my line wasn't even wet. Very much disgusted, I prepared to leave. In the process of departing, I brought my line up over the dam and put the hook in the "wrong" side and started walking toward shore. Suddenly I felt a decisive jerk on the line, so I yanked back and out came a two-pound catfish. Very deliberately I strung my trophy on a willow and stalked off. That catfish, bigger than any caught by Carlos or my uncle, gave my ego its biggest boost in many a year.

As suddenly as it began, it ended. One day my mother received a letter from my father telling her that our new home was ready for occupancy. Two days later I found myself in a cloak room, with a teacher sniffing over me and telling me to be a good boy, and I sniffled right back and told her that I would. I then marched majestically out of the Central School, an apple in one hand and a box of crackerjack in the other. But there was a great problem on my mind, one that had been worrying me for the past school year, so I waited in the school yard until recess. When the remarkable Isidore stepped forth, I immediately ran over to him and pleaded with him to tell me how he could bite a nail in two. Isidore, realizing that I was going away for good, generously told me his secret. He would

saw the nail in two with a hack saw, then glue it back together with a non-waterproof glue. On the bus in the mornings, he would put the nail in his mouth and pretend to be chewing on it while he was really soaking the glue. After the nail came apart, Isidore would suck the glue off the ends and present the nail to me. Truly, Isidore was a genius. As a token of my good will, I gave him my last apple, and thereupon headed for the railroad station to meet my mother with only a box of crackerjack left. Carlos was there to bid me goodbye, and in a weak moment, I gave him my box of crackerjack. Empty-handed, I got on the train and left behind me forever the dear old farm, my uncles, Carlos, the cats, Mawwer's Swoo, the Central School, and last but not least, the brilliant Isidore.

MOON SONG

Let the wolf keep the cold of night inside of him;
 I will take the fire, and the conversational din
 Of the logs. I want no cold, black communication
 With the arctic waste. The syncopation
 Of the gray wolf's song falls across the tundra, beckoning
 Worshipers of the moon to the sacred rite, thus echoing
 Services of ancestors across the frozen land,
 Summoning beneath the chill sky his lean band
 Of born raiders; boasting to the prey the pack
 Are coming; theirs is the hunt; let them track
 Down their victim, keeping the cold beauty of their survival
 I know a death that hints at no revival
 Of the primitive. Undramatically, it approaches wanly
 But one is prepared for it, and surrenders breath calmly.
 I would not want to be the deer, weary from the race,
 Falling beneath sharp teeth, ending the chase.

Helen McDonald

